

memo to government attorneys about the case. Her actions, the three-judge panel said, violated the commission's mandate as an independent arbiter.

Veronza is currently waiting for a new hearing and it is the hope that this will be the time that he is finally released from prison after more than 40 plus years of incarceration for a crime that he did not commit.

The truth of the matter is that Veronza has served his full sentence under law plus several years of illegal detention. He has been a model prisoner with the highest possible Bureau of Prison rating and recommended for parole several times, only to have his release rescinded, literally, at the last minute.

He received a very favorable review and recommendation for release based on rigorous psychological and personality testing administered by a highly reputable independent agency. His petitions for parole have been strongly supported by a number of prison officials and administrators who worked closely with him over the years and can't say enough about his role as a mentor and role model to younger inmates.

His efforts to be released have

also been supported in writing by a former member of the USPC, head of the NY Parole Commission and a member of the U.S. Congress. Over the last three decades, he has worked hard to improve himself in all ways possible—personally, socially and spiritually. Yet, he continues to languish in prison, be subjected to threats and intimidation, demeaned by the news media and falsely accused by the very group that claims to be the guardian of law and order in our society.

Veronza's incarceration highlights the continued war being waged by the U.S. government against the Black liberation movement. Until he is free, none of us will be. AMANDLA!

If you wish to write Veronza, you can send letters to:

Veronza Bowers, Jr.  
35316-136  
FMC Butner Medium II  
Post Office Box 1500  
Butner, North Carolina  
27509

# Veronza Bowers, Jr.

## Black Panther Member Illegally Held Captive In a Federal Prison



Veronza Bowers, Jr. is a former Black Panther political prisoner serving a life sentence for the killing of a forest ranger in 1973. Bowers has continued to maintain his innocence, arguing that he has been the target of the FBI's COINTELPRO. His conviction rests on two informants who exchange their testimony for funds, cars and reduced sentences. Furthermore, authorities have stopped at nothing to keep Veronza Bowers in prison, even detaining him illegally after his ordered release.

Veronza Bowers was one of the principle organizers of the Black Panther Party Chapter in Omaha, Nebraska in the late '60s. He then traveled to California where he took on the responsibilities as captain of the Richmond Branch. As the repression against the Panthers increased, like many of the members of the party,

Veronza became a target of COINTELPRO, a program designed to destroy people and organizations the government considered "politically dangerous" to the national security of the United States of America.

On September 15, 1973, Veronza was arrested in Mill Valley, California on state charges of robbery, receiving possession of stolen property pursuant to a federal search warrant. A small army of FBI, Marin County Sheriffs, Berkley and Oakland City detectives, and Animal Shelter police made a pre-dawn raid, which netted four adults, three children and two German shepherds. All the state charges were later dismissed because there was no probable cause for the search warrant.

After the state charges were dropped, the federal government stepped back in and charged

Veronza with first-degree murder of a National Park Service Ranger. The government used the testimony of two informants, Alan Veale and Jonathan Shoher, who had also been charged with the crime, along with Veronza. These two men had both been convicted of armed bank robbery. However, in exchange for their testimony against Veronza, both had all charges against them dropped in connection with their part in the murder of the park ranger. In addition one of the informants served no time in connection with his bank robbery conviction for which he had been sentenced to 12 years in prison and was paid \$10,000 after entering the witness protection program.

There were no other eyewitnesses independent of these informants to link Veronza to the crime. At his trial, Veronza, who testified on his own behalf, and his wife offered alibi testimony, which was not credited by the jury. Nor was testimony of two relatives of the informants who insisted that they were lying. The testimony of the informants led to the conviction of Veronza. He was sentenced to life in prison. Veronza has consistently proclaimed his innocence of the

crime he claims he never committed even at the expense of having his appeals for parole denied--for which an admission of guilt and contrition as an expression of remorse is virtually required--he has insisted on maintaining his innocence.

In August 1979, after serving six years in federal prison, Veronza Bowers attempted to escape from Lompoc Federal Correctional Institution. However, he was captured before ever reaching the outside.

After the failed attempt to self-liberation, Veronza made the decision to focus on his spiritual-self. He became a "model" prisoner, studying

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**“Even though the government officials claim that there are no political prisoners in this country’s prisons and jails, it’s simply not true”**

**- Veronza Bowers**

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music, a variety of Asian healing arts - including shiatsu, acupuncture, tsubo and massage therapy - and developed a strong interest in Buddhist meditation. Veronza became an honorary elder of the

Lompoc Tribe of Five Feathers, a Native American spiritual and cultural group. He became a mentor and founder of the All-Faith Meditation Group, a non-denominational spiritual organization devoted to healing meditation using the Japanese shakuhachi flute.

In December of 2004, the U.S. Parole Commission held a hearing on Veronza Bowers case. They found that Bowers was not likely to commit future crimes and had “been an outstanding inmate” for the previous 15 years. The panel decided to grant him mandatory parole in February 2005.

However, days before he was to be released, a commission staff member organized a new hearing that included the widow of the slain park ranger. The panel met again in May and deadlocked in a 2-2 vote on whether to release Bowers, which by law should have allowed him to leave prison.

U.S. Parole Commissioner Deborah Spagnoli sent a memo to the U.S. Attorney General, Alberto Gonzalez, requesting for him to intervene. Gonzales asked the commission in June 2005 to review its decision, and days later the panel voted to temporarily

delay Bowers’ release.

Commissioners went a step further in October 2005, voting 4-0 to keep Bowers in prison indefinitely, citing a failed escape attempt he launched with another inmate in 1979 and fears he could commit another crime.

After the decision, Spagnoli sent a one-word email to a Justice Department attorney: “Victory.” Bowers, meanwhile, filed a 2008 lawsuit seeking his release in federal court in Atlanta, where he is now being held. A judge rejected the complaint. Bowers challenged the decision and brought it to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals.

In October of 2011, The Atlanta-based 11th Circuit Court of Appeals decision last week found that then-U.S. Parole Commissioner Deborah Spagnoli “impermissibly tainted” the board’s decision to delay Veronza Bowers’ release when she wrote a

